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SUBJECT: EASTERN DRC NOTES - MAY 8

¶1. (U) The items contained in this report consist principally of spot information from various sources. This report is not exhaustive, nor can all the information contained therein be confirmed at this time.

Security Situation

¶2. (SBU) FARDC troops rescued four Congolese citizens from the LRA after a short skirmish in Ndanda, just south of Dungu.

¶3. (SBU) MONUC and FARDC sources state they have established control of the area around Poto Poto and Tchei in Ituri following a three-phase campaign against armed groups in the area. A MONUC commander said the rebel group FRPI was likely responsible for the retaliation killing of three girls and one woman in Maga, just south of Aveba (Comment: Continued clashes in Ituri in recent weeks are a consequence of an incomplete disarmament and integration process in the region. Similar risks exist in the context of the incomplete disarmament and integration process in the Kivus. End comment).

¶4. (SBU) Ex-CNDP fighters (now in a newly integrated FARDC battalion) have set up roadblocks in several places around Masisi, claiming that money collected from travelers will go to wounded CNDP comrades. MONUC sent out a large patrol on May 7 to dismantle a roadblock near Kiroliro. The ex-CNDP fighters claimed that Governor Paluku had given them permission to tax travelers during his recent visit to the area.

¶5. (SBU) FARDC troops were ambushed near Kilembie (near Masisi) by armed men (presumably FDLR), resulting in an unknown number of casualties. FARDC troops then went to Kilembie and looted the town.

¶6. (SBU) Congolese Park Service (ICCN) rangers arrested a local chief on May 6 for transporting charcoal made in Virunga National Park. FARDC elements demanded his release and reportedly attacked the ICCN base, inciting locals to turn on the rangers as well. The ICCN called MONUC, which quickly responded and told the ICCN to release the chief. A Goma-based diplomat who was in the area said the charcoal was produced by FDLR rebels and called MONUC's order for his release "unacceptable." He noted that the FARDC was protecting the FDLR, probably in return for a share of the profits, and such illegal enterprises must be shut down. A MONUC commander responded that the call for the chief's release was simply to defuse a potentially explosive situation, and an investigation would be conducted into the incident.

¶7. (SBU) The area around Bunyakiri near the North Kivu/South Kivu border remains a potential flash point, as the FDLR continues to reinforce within the region and send threatening messages to local villages. The FARDC also has a large presence in the area under the command of ex-CNDP Colonel Makenga, but they have made themselves unpopular by harassing and stealing from locals.

Integration

18. (SBU) The South Kivu Luberizi regroupment center is scheduled for closure in the near future. The Kamombo regroupment center on the Haut Plateau is scheduled to open next week, and MONUC sources hope it will entice the FRF to end its hold-out and sign the agreement committing the group to integrate or disarm. The integration process for South Kivu is behind schedule, out of funds, and waiting for a promised German contribution in order to build new camps (Note: The proposed schedule for opening and closing regroupment centers set June 25 as the final date, but it seems unlikely that this will hold. End note).

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